ECONOMIC IDEAS OF THIRUVALLUVAR

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By

DR. B. NATARAJAN, M.A., D.Litt.



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Thirukkural is classified among the didactic works of the Sangam Age. It is variously dated from 3rd Century B. C. to 2nd Century A.D. It is considered a work of ethics *par excellence*. If ethics is the Science of Living, then Thirukkural is the undying classic on the subject. The preoccupation of the work is with the fundamentals of life here below. Of the four-fold conventional division of life's aim into Dharma or Aram (Ethics), Artha or Porul (Polity), Kama or Inbam (Love), and Moksha or Veedu (Liberation), Thirukkural deliberately excludes the fourth objective, and confines itself to the first three. Valluvar was concerned with building of a mode—the three-dimensional Model of Living. All life here below, as he saw it, is comprehensible in terms of these three categories. Anyone living up to the ideals of these three life's divisions will have lived a full life. "He will certainly be counted among the Gods".[1]

The Model is an integrated structure. The three chambers of the mansion he erects are inter-connected. A single current runs through them all—Aram or a body of ethical concepts. This central thread is of a fundamental quality. Life may vary and proliferate in its contents; but the fundamentals of right living are unchanging. Life has to be lived as a whole. The ethics behind living is pervasive. It is indivisible into compartments. Morality knows no distinctions of class, caste, sex, time or space; it is the fundamental truth. In this sense, Thiruvalluvar is an Idealist.

Yet Valluvar is not merely that. If that is all, all Kural could have been contained in perhaps half a dozen chapters. The Ideal assumes its meaning and significance only as it is applied to the business of living. The Ethics Fundamental faces varying situations in the realm of reality. Life is a highly

1. வையத்துள் வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவன் வானுறையும்
தெய்வத்துள் வைக்கப் படும். (50)

complex activity. It is something of a multi-faceted glass dome; and as through all its segments the central spark of Ethics Fundamental burns eternally, the dome of life throws up a spectrum of variegated hues, presenting an appearance of differences, diversity and changeability. Yet there is no contradiction in all this; no inconsistency with the Ideal; for it is but the appearance—the unchanging Ideal in the context of changing Reality. The Ideal still remains there, fixed and fundamental. The appearance is the inevitable result of the process of application—the marrying of the Ideal to the Real, the permanent to the passing phenomena. That constitutes the intelligent way of living.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa gives a story. I shall reproduce it in the inimitable words of the story—teller 'M'.

"In a forest there lived a holy man who had many disciples. One day he taught them to see God in all beings and, knowing things, to bow low before them all. A disciple went to the forest to gather wood for the sacrificial fire. Suddenly he heard an outcry: 'Get out of the way. A mad elephant is coming.' All but the disciple of the holy man took to their heels. He reasoned that the elephant was also God in another form. Then why should he run away from it? He stood still, bowed before the animal, and began to sing its praises. The mahut of the elephant was shouting: 'Run away', 'Run away!'. But the disciple did not move. The animal seized him with its trunk, cast him to one side, and went on its way. Hurt and bruised, the disciple lay unconscious on the ground. Hearing what had happened, his teacher and brother disciples came to him and carried him to the hermitage. With the help of some medicine he soon regained consciousness. Someone asked him, 'You knew the elephant was coming. Why did not you leave the place?' 'But', he said, 'our teacher has told us that God Himself has taken all these forms, of animals as well as men. Therefore, thinking it was only the Flephant God that was coming, I did not run away'. At this the teacher said: 'Yes, my child, it is true that the Elephant God was coming; but the mahut God

forbade you to stay there. Since all are manifestations of God, why did not you trust the mahut's words? You should have heeded the words of the mahut God." (Laughter).[2]

Again, coming nearer our times, take the life of Gandhiji. His basic philosophy was Non-violence. But when the occasion demanded, the Mahatma did not hesitate to preach to his people, "Do or die." Or, when the honour of women was threatened in the troubled days of Partition in 1947, he did not think it inconsistent with his ideal philosophy to preach a course of action other than that of passive resistance.

There is an incident told of Valluvar's own life, apocryphal though it be. Valluvar was selling a piece of cloth which he himself had woven on his own loom. A rogue, intent on mischief, tore it into two halves and asked the price of one-half. Valluvar quoted half price. The professed buyer further subdivided it and then asked the price of the quarter piece. Valluvar quoted one-fourth. But when the trying customer proceeded to further fragment the piece, Valluvar showed his fist! Patience, his ideal, had now reached the stage of realistic application. And whenever it does so, it assumes an aspect of intelligent reasoning which is prima facie divorced from the ideal. But in fact it does no violence to it. It is but investing the ideal with, what the economists call, the utilities of time and place. It is the translating of the ideal to the rationality of living. It is by no means a transmutation of the ideal. It is but the living of the ideal, as life demands it. The Sage Vyasa would have delineated a far less noble Dharmaputra, had he not made the embodiment of patience fight when fighting was called for.

All this, however, is not to fall in with the views of certain philosophers who hold that ethics is a changing code, in concept and contents, changing with times and circumstances. Where Valluvar seems to differ is that there is a core of fundamental concepts, which is unvarying and permanent, the bedrock of all human conduct, the motor force of all right living. What make

2. Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by 'M'.

it change, or rather appear to change, are the realities of life's situations. But the core remains unaffected.

This then is Valluvar's contribution—the postulating of an ideal code, and the delineation of that ideal code to meet the realities of all major situations that life gives rise to. It is not a reconciliation of the ideal with the real. It is the blending of them into a harmonious way of living. In a word Pragmatic Idealism. A born artist in weaving that he was, he could work the woof of living reality into the warp of fundamental ideality and produce a piece of workmanship that is at once splendid and wearing in its qualities. The Spiritual and the Material are no longer to be two distinct paths, mutually exclusive. The Spiritual can be lived in the Material, the Ideal in the Real. The Spiritual is a purposeless negation if it bears no relevance to the realities of material living; and the Material is base anarchy if uninformed by the Spiritual. The one supports and sustains the other. Abstract philosophy does not interest Valluvar. What absorbs his mind is concrete practical philosophy—philosophy applied to life. Hence his devotion to ethics, political philosophy and sociology rather than to logic and epistemology. It was a unique synthesis.

The times needed such a synthesis. A peep into the infinite vista of Time shows that history is a rhythmic process, alternating between epochs of emotion and epochs of rationality. Centuries of striving after the material things of life have been followed by equally long periods of religious fervour and other—worldly preoccupation. The worldliness allures, for a time eggs on humanity to great achievements, then with surfeit palls; the zest and vigour of physical living diminish and the human mind longs for a dreamy change. Then follow years of passivity which ripens into apathy and lack of effort. Thus the rhythm goes on swinging from the *yen* of the Spiritual to the *yan* of the Material. It is so with the physical human body: it is so with the contemplative mind. It is so with peoples and nations. It is the elementary law of action and reaction in eternal operation. It has been so with the history of the Tamils.

The Tamils, it is now acknowledged on all hands, are one of the most ancient peoples of the world. Perhaps the antiquity of their civilization was co-existent with that of the Indus Valley people dating to the third or fourth millennium B.C. Their recorded history at least goes back to 2500 years. The earliest work in Tamil now extant is the grammar Tholkappiyam, the date of which is placed generally by scholars around 500 B.C. But Tholkappiyam reveals a civilisation already mature and organised in many ways. It refers to numerous literary works that had existed before; and postulates that grammar is the distillate of literature, even as oil is of sesame seed.[3] The literature that went before the grammar of Tholkappiyam should have taken several centuries to evolve.

With Tholkappiyam came the Sangam Age. Of the numerous works that followed, only a handful are left behind. These, however, unmistakably reveal that the Sangam Age, considered the golden age of the Tamils, was largely preoccupied with the building up of the material achievements of life. Love and war formed the main themes of the poets. Ethics no doubt had a place, but was mostly incidental to the two main themes. There was no obsession with things of the spirit, no elaborate enquiries of the life hereafter, no metaphysical disquisitions on God and soul. Life ran on a somewhat simple rhythmic course, alternating between the family bosom and the battle field, and in the interval in search of worldly goods within the country and abroad. No heavenly doubts troubled their carefree hearts, such as did the contemporary Upanishad thinkers in the north. The Tamils of the Sangam Age were realists by and large.

Then came Buddhism, and in its wake Jainism, into Tamil land. The slumber of thought was stirred. Ethics and concern with the other world began to change life; and with the State patronage given to these religious, they began to take an increasing

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3. இலக்கிய மின்றேல் இலக்கணமின்று
எள்ளின்றகில் எண்ணெயுமின்று.
—தொல்காப்பியம்

hold on every department of people's lives. The Vedic religion, too, had its influence, but there is no evidence to show that its deeper truths and metaphysical subtleties as yet made that impression on the day-to-day life and conduct of the people that the two protestant religions of Buddhism and Jainism did. The Vedic religion was ever seeking to assimilate and coalesce with the earlier beliefs and culture, whatever they were, and its influence was largely silent and slow. At this time it came mostly in the form of legends and myths, the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, leading the way and working themselves into the beliefs of the people. The thought process they engendered, although permeating a wider layer of humanity, was nevertheless imperceptible. But not so with the two protestant religions. They were highly organised faiths. A host of monks and nuns spread themselves all over the country, worked their way to the seats of power and, with the zeal of neophytes, soon began to change the very thought-pattern of the Tamils. In this endeavour the proselytizers forgot the element of 'golden mean' in the teachings of their founders. The middle path became the extreme path. Religion and denominational ethics dominated the scene. Love became an object of disgust, and war an act of despisal. Physical valour and indulgence in material pleasures were looked down upon. Begging became a laudable objective, and accumulation an act of sin. Non-violence was carried to fantastic extremes. Such was the democratic influence of the new ethics, that it assumed the character of pervasive negation. From a predominantly rationalistic attitude towards life leavened by a simple ethics of good conduct, the life of the Tamils of the Sangam Age passed into a systematic disparagement of the whole world as total illusion.

It was in times such as this that Thiruvalluvar must have lived. He must have seen the dangers of the situation, the ruin that extreme emphasis on asceticism was spelling to the vitality of a people and to their simple joy of living. He must have been anxious to introduce a balance and restore sanity into life. Yet this could not be done by extolling the virtues of the old to the exclusion of the new. The new gospels had much to teach that was of lasting value. They had taken root in the hearts of men.

All that was good in them must be retained, preserved and fostered in the interest of truth and the good of humanity. But they must be placed in their proper perspective and in correct proportions. The vigour of earthly living must be re-enthroned in the hearts of the Tamils, the values of the new teachings receiving their due emphasis. A synthesis of the old and the new was called for. A lesser man than Valluvar, a Neitzche, would have ended up by preaching a message of hatred and doctrines of an anti-God character.

But the sage and seer that Valluvar was, a poet and a scholar, an Idealist and Realist at once, he produced a body of doctrines that is not only matchless as a work of synthesis in the entire world of literature, but has also acquired a position, unique in transcending time and space. For, the problems he set out to solve are problems eternally recurring—life affirmation and life negation; and the Kural that he produced had to be a philosophy as a way of living, and a way of living according to a philosophy. Hence today, the ephemeral in his work is unseen; only the permanent abides. But undoubtedly there must have been an immediate purpose. That must have been achieved either in his own time, or a little later, as great doctrines in those days of slow communication took time to percolate into mass thinking. If it was in the first or second century A.D. that Valluvar lived, it is obvious that his warnings were not taken due note of, and the Tamils had let the holocaust of Kalabhra Interregnum overtake them in the 3rd and 4th century A.D., or, if as some scholars of South Indian History have done, he is placed either during this Dark Age of Tamil History or immediately after, his teachings had largely fulfilled themselves in the restoration of the joy of living for the Tamils during the Pallava ascendancy. Most likely that he lived prior to the Kalabhra invasion, probably he intended his work as a note of warning and an appeal to his countrymen to stir betimes and be up and doing. And the inevitable time lag between postulation of great teachings and their percolation into collective thinking and action had rendered the intervention of the Dark Age possible.

For, it must be remembered, Valluvar's work was intended as an appeal to a wide public. He was not merely a scholar talking to a scholar, but a prophet exhorting his people to a course of action which he considered the most sane for a glorious life. His was a poetry, not written for poetry's sake, nor to extol the virtues and largesses of a patron chieftain in any expectant emotion, as was the fashion in the Sangam Age, and even after, but a poetry with a purpose, a theme with a moral to tell. If, in the process, he succeeded in the role of the Ancient Mariner and held 'his wedding-guest with the glittering eye of poetry' and 'made him stand still and listen iike a three-year child', it was simply that Valluvar 'had his will.' It was the acme of supreme art. And so, it was no accident that he chose the couplet verse as the medium of communication. Valluvar was a democrat in thought and form. Democratic thought had to assume a democratic form. And so was the Kural metre chosen. It was a choice, deliberate and purposive. It meant a signal departure from all that had gone before in Tamil poetry. Yet it was the aptest medium of communication for the achievement of the poet's purpose. In that age when literacy by ear was as important as literary by the eye, memorising played a vital role in the imparting of education; and nothing could aid this audio-education better than a simple couplet, almost as easy to get currency as a housewife's aphorism, and as likely to be effective in the guidance of day-to-day conduct in life. Ten was the number beyond which counting was difficult for the masses, and imprisoning all essential thoughts on a subject within ten couplets was to ensure that nothing worth-while was missed. The uniformity this form spelt meant some risk to the freedom and excellence of poetical expression. Lesser men who attempted to handle it have later failed. But Valluvar had the supreme confidence of the born poet. He knew what he was about. The medium was but the means to the end. He could choose what medium he willed, and yet make a success of it. The wonder is not that he chose the medium but that he succeeded so well with it. Even the most imaginative poetic thoughts and poetic imageries found no obstruction or hesitation in their free expression. Thought was not sacrificed to

Form, neither Form to Thought. The right thought in the right form—an achievement unique in the history of poetry down the ages. Not once does the form flag or begin to stale. In fact, as the work moves on to the themes of Love and War, which ordinarily might have been better expressed in freer and spacious meters, the tiny couplet rises to the occasion and performs ever imaginative feats—a sheer miracle which only a Master Poet could have achieved.

This lecture is intended to serve mainly as the background for an understanding of the lectures that follow. I shall, therefore, re-state briefly main ideas:

1. For Valluvar, life is an integrated whole. Thirukkural is the postulation of philosophy as a way of life and a way of living according to a philosophy. It is Pragmatic Idealism.

2. In justifying the demands of the Ideal to the needs of the Pragmatic, Thiruvalluvar knew no contradictions or inconsistencies. The contradictions and inconsistencies are more appearances than real. In this he is in company of the greatest world teachers like Jesus Christ, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Mahatma Gandhi.

3. Thirukkural is a work of synthesis. Thiruvalluvar sought to synthesise the two eternal tendencies in human history, life affirmation and life negation.

4. As these two tendencies are eternally recurring in a rhythm all through history, and among all nations and peoples, the synthesis acquires a permanent and pervasive significance.

5. Yet the work must have had an immediate purpose; to lead his people back to a positive way of life, without losing the values that the negative way of life had to teach.

6. His was a democratic mission. Kural was not intended merely for the chosen few. Valluvar was a democrat in life and thought; and Kural is democratic in form, content and appeal.

7. The choice of form was deliberate and purposive. It was the one that could best serve the democratic purpose. But

it has great limitations as a vehicle of poetical expression. Valluvar risked it in the interest of his democratic cause. But the success he made of it is a miracle in the history of poetical expression. Even the subtlest nuances of emotion and shades of thought and poetical conceits were successfully expressed. A genius alone could do this.

II

The key to the understanding of an author lies in the Introduction. So much was the importance attached to this part of a work by the later Tamil writers that Nannul, the Tamil grammar, laid down that without Introduction, a book is no book.[1] In fact, in modern times, some writers like Bernard Shaw invested their Prefaces with such great importance that these were invariably much longer than their works. The main theme of their works did not permit them to express all their basic thoughts on the subject on hand, and so the authors had perforce to seek the elbow room that a Preface provided for a full and free expression of their central thesis. Thiruvalluvar, however, was the master of epitomic expression, and he could contain his basic ideas in the first four chapters of Thirukkural which form the *Payiram* or Introduction.

The first chapter is entitled 'Invocation to God' and commences with the argument that God is the beginning of the World. The argument is in the nature of an analogy, and cosmological in character. How else could the existence of God as the Beginning of all things be demonstrated? Not by any empirical evidence that is universal. Not certainly by an appeal to authority, for no one is acceptable to all. Not by metaphysics, that relies on intuition that cannot be postulated for every one. But the strange thing about Valluvar's argument is it seems to have been addressed to the literate and the learned. His analogy begins with a philological argument. 'A' is the first sound in all alphabets; even

1. *ஆயிர முகத்தால் அகன்ற தாயுனும்*
பாயிர மின்றேல் பனுவலின்று.
— Nannul: Payiram.

so God is the beginning of all the worlds.[2] And again, of what avails all learning, if it does not lead one to the worship of the Supreme Intelligence?[3] Perhaps, Valluvar was trying to counter the argument of a school of intellectuals that then existed and who denied God. The common man, then and now, needed no argument for the existence of God. It was ingrained in him as part of a simple traditional belief. There are speculations in which I shall not indulge, however tempting they are. They will distract me away from the immediate purpose of my lectures. Suffice it to say that Thiruvalluvar adopted the belief in the existence of God as a basic postulate of his system of ethics.

Next, Valluvar proceeds to sing of the glories of rain. Why this, immediately after God? Valluvar is a fundamental thinker. Rains lend the basic support to material life. Without it there is no vegetation, no life, no prosperity. Rains symbolised the substratum of material life; and unless that is assured, all ethics, right living, good life, and ordered existence are impossible. History would be at a standstill; man to man would be a wolf. Water is life-giving and so spirit-giving. Rain is the compendious expression of all the economic factors that make for material life. It is the single and most visible element known for life-affirmation. In a sense, this is an acceptance of economic determinism in history; but with Thiruvalluvar economics is not the exclusive determinant, as it was with Marx and other Materialist Dialectists. Economics comes only after the spiritual—or the religious, if we want to have it that way—in his scheme of values. Or at best, it is a conjoint determinant. Nevertheless with Valluvar economics is a basic determinant.

Food is the basis of life. Rain brings food, and itself, as water, forms food.[4] The world is sustained by it; so is it verily

2. அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதி
பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு. (1)
3. கற்றதனால் ஆய பயன்என்கொல் வாலறிவன்
நற்றாள் தொழாஅ ரெனின். (2)
4. துப்பார்க்குத் துப்பாய துப்பாக்கித் துப்பார்க்குத்
துப்பாயதூஉம் மழை. (12)

ambrosia.[5] The consequences of a failure of rain are terrible to contemplate. It would spell disaster and ruin to all economic life. Hunger would stalk the land and torment this wide sea-girt world.[6] The ploughmen will not plough.[7] Even a pastoral, nomadic existence will be impossible. Not even a blade of grass will grow.[8] Neither can you exist on sea food; for "even the wealth of the wide sea will be diminished, if the cloud that has drawn its waters up gives them not back again".[9] Will there be any religion left? Neither will there be festivals nor daily worship of the gods.[10] There will be no charity, no generosity. The milk of human kindness will dry up when the rains dry up. Life cannot exist without water; neither can right conduct.[11]

It is not without purpose that the Poet dwells at length on the gruesome consequence of a world in which the rains fail. The picture is vividly drawn to bring home to the reader the importance of a stable economic structure for the peace and progress of the world. As long as hunger gnaws at the door of men, such peace and progress would be impossible to achieve. Peace and progress are ideas with a spiritual content in them; men cannot be led to the spiritual waters and to drink deep at them, when the waters of economic life dry up at the springs. There

5. வானின் றுலகம் வழங்கி வருதலால்
தான்அமிழ்தம் என்றுணரற் பாற்று. (11)

6. விண்ணின்று பொய்ப்பின் விரிநீர் வியன்உலகத்து
உள் நின்று உடற்றும் பசி. (13)

7. ஏரின் அழாஅர் உழவர் புயல்என்னும்
வாரி வளங்குன்றிக் கால். (14)

8. விசும்பின் துளிவீழின் அல்லால்மற் றுங்கே
பசும்புல் தலைகாண் பரிது. (16)

9. நெடுங்கடலும் தன்னீர்மை குன்றும் தடிந்தெழிலி
தான்நல்கா தாகி விடின். (17)

10. சிறப்பொடு பூசனை செல்லாது வானம்
வறக்குமேல் வானோர்க்கும் ஈண்டு. (18)

11. நீரின்று அமையாது உலகெனின் யார்யார்க்கும்
வானின்று அமையா தொழுக்கு. (20)

is a modicum of economic life, on which alone individual morality, as well as social morality, can take root and thrive. Those who preach peace and progress, good conduct and orderly social behaviour to empty stomach may as well preach to the winds. Peace like prosperity is basically economic.

From these basic ideas follow certain important economic tenets. The basis of a stable economic life is rain, because rain furnishes food. Hence, agriculture is the most fundamental economic activity; and lest there should be any doubt on this, Valluvar elaborates it later in the chapter on agriculture. If agriculture is the basic economic activity for all times and climes, that depends on rain, a God's gift as Valluvar might have implied, or a natural resource as economists now term it, on the abundance of this natural resource, therefore, all economic life depends. Natural resources, in Valluvar's economic system, thus take the primacy. But among the natural resources, land is given the pride of place in modern economics. For, land is defined to include, not only the soil and the sub-soil, but also the minerals that are found hidden under it, the atmosphere above that embraces the climate and rainfall. This is achieved only by an extension of definition. Valluvar, on the other hand, held water to be the primary natural resource. The abundance and timeliness of water determine even the character of land as a factor of production. There can be a soilless agriculture, but no moistureless agriculture. And this natural resource has an economy of proportions about it. Excess may spell ruin as timeliness and proper proportion may bring prosperity. "It is rain that both ruins and aids the ruined to rise."[12]

This resource picture of Valluvar may not be satisfying to the economic planners of today. There is great concern among them now with the mineral resources of a State. That country is considered potentially rich which has a wealth of coal, iron, copper and industrial minerals. Economic growth depends on their rate of exploitation and utilisation. But mineral resources are a part

12. கெடுப்பதூஉம் கெட்டார்க்குச் சார்வாய்மற் றாங்கே
எடுப்பதூஉம் எல்லாம் மழை. (15)

of the Land Resources by very definition; and with Valluvar, Land Resources are a part of the Water Resources by definition. So Valluvar has not excluded the importance of mineral resources. It is there, by implication. The question is only of emphasis. In the ultimate, it is water that matters, for that alone gives food. A stable economy is built on an adequate production of food, not merely its supply. If the supplies have to come from elsewhere, there comes in an element of dependence and instability. It is well-known that some of the Latin American countries and countries like Saudi Arabia, whose wealth consists chiefly in mineral resources, have experienced the most unstable Governments that the world has witnessed. Revolutions have followed revolutions in quick succession, and Governments have become a hotbed of intrigue, internecine warfare and foreign intervention. Therefore, a self-sufficiency of food is the *sine qua non* of *basic* stability, strategy and plenty. If this is accepted, as with every new Plan this country's planners themselves increasingly realise, Valluvar's peculiar emphasis on rains as the greatest single natural resource will be appreciated in all its significance.

The third chapter in the Introduction is entitled 'The Greatness of the Ascetics'. One Commentator—Parithiyar—interprets it as the 'Triumph of the Renunciate'. How is this a topic fundamental to a treatise on Social Ethics? And why does it follow a discussion on the importance of material support to life under the title of "In praise of rain"? Even the astute commentator, Parimelazhagar, who usually takes elaborate pains in explaining the sequence of topics and justifying their context, is silent here. His unusual silence demands all the greater reflection on our part.

Next to an adequate economic substratum, what a society requires for its stability, continuity and progress is Spiritual Leadership. These leaders are the elect few. They are not the Philosopher-Kings that Plato in his Republic dreamt of. They are men who have given up, what Bentham calls, their "self-regarding" interests and have given themselves upto "other-regarding" pursuits, who have renounced all and stand true to

their rule of conduct in scorn of consequences.[13] The leadership such souls provide is a spiritual leadership. They are the best—the salt of the earth. Theirs is not a self-abnegation born of an impulse in an odd moment. It is renunciation in a spirit of sacrifice, after having tasted the ways of life according to codes of life prescribed, and after having contemplated and deliberated upon it in the most rational manner. Such renunciation is not a negative act. It belongs to the realm of positive sacrifice. There were men who renounced the worldly ways for other ends. In fact, one commentator, Manakudavar, proceeds to explain that there were works which extolled the greatness of renunciation, if only to cloak their falsehoods, otherwise rampant. Of such is not the spiritual leadership of the world fashioned. They are men whose sacrifice comes as a mellowed fruit of life's duty done. At the commencement of a well regulated life, they seek to control, canalise and sublimate the cravings of the senses into purposeful activity for nobler purposes, for the good of the entire humanity. They withdraw into themselves, so that they may better serve the humanity when occasion demands. They are introverts, so that they may be better extroverts. They are contemplative individually, so that they may be more active socially. They love themselves less so that they may love humanity more. Their love knows no distinctions of class, creed, time or place. Nay, they love the whole of creation and possess universal tenderness.[14] These men of sacrifice, the Leaders of the Spirit, in time become a store-house of power, with which they can make even the heaven's king tremble.[15] Their speeches take the character of prophetic utterances. Their words work like *mantra* and can rouse the people to great emotions. They can shape the destinies of

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13. ஒழுக்கத்து நீத்தார் பெருமை விழுப்பத்து
வேண்டும் பனுவற் றுணிவு. (21)

14. அந்தணர் என்போர் அறவோர்மற் றெவ்வுயிர்க்கும்
செந்தண்மை பூண்டொழுகலான். (30)

15. ஐந்தவித்தான் ஆற்றல் அகல்விசும்புளார் கோமான்
இந்திரனே சாலும் கரி. (25)

men. They shall perform miracles; achieve the impossible.[16] Their wrath, when roused, would be volcanic; impossible to resist.[17] They alone are the mighty, for they perform mighty deeds. All else in comparison are pygmies, for what these can do are but trifles.[18] Their greatness is beyond measure; as well try and count all the dead since creation's beginning.[19] They stand aloft, towering above all, on the majestic peaks of virtue.[20]

The Old Testament is full of such Leaders of the Spirit. They are the Prophets who have tried to stir the Jewish nation from time to time, led them away from captivity, and roused them to great achievements even in arid desert surroundings. The Epics and the Puranas are replete with the Rishis of old, before whom pelf and power lay prostrate in obeisance. Their influence lasts long after they had left their scene of action. But are those days ended? Have they no place in this scientific age? In our own times, in our own country, Gandhiji was a Rishi of this type. His sense of truth, spirit of sacrifice, and acts of self-abnegation were all of a positive character, calculated to stir the apathy of the Indian masses and lead them on to purposeful activity. His writ ran through the length and breadth of the land, even when the sceptre was held by other hands. His words acted like magic to rouse a mass of people who lay dazed with power, and paralysed by fear, to heroic acts of valour. He performed the greatest miracle, perhaps of all times, when he led three hundred million of his countrymen back to freedom. He made men of them. Nay, more. Such was the chain reaction that his achievement through the

16. நிறைமொழி மாந்தர் பெருமை நிலத்து
மறைமொழி காட்டி விடும். (28)

17. குணமென்னும் குன்றேறி நின்றார் வெகுளி
கணமேயும் காத்த லரிது. (29)

18. செயற்கரிய செய்வார் பெரியர்; சிறியர்
செயற்கரிய செய்கலா தார். (26)

19. துறந்தார் பெருமை துணைக்கூறின் வையத்து
இறந்தாரை எண்ணிக்கொண் டற்று. (22)

20. குணமென்னும் குன்றேறி நின்றார் வெகுளி
கணமேயும் காத்தல் அரிது. (29)

vehicle of Spirit started, that in about ten years, over fifty more countries were liberated from the yoke of colonialism to join the ranks of the United Nations as equal members of a great world confederation. The impact of Gandhian spiritual teachings had its reverberation, not only in the countries of Far East Asia, but also on the entire African Continent. Had Valluvar lived today and sought an illustration for his chapter on Greatness of Self-Abnegation, he would have readily seized on the life of the Mahatma. Ultimately, it is the spirit that moves.

The fourth pillar of ordered social life, according to Valluvar, is a code of individual and social conduct that has abiding values. It is compendiously referred to as *Aram* by Valluvar and could be equated in a sense with 'Dharma' in Sanskrit. Dharma has three aspects—one, a moral code of a permanent and universal validity; two, a code which was to be practised in social relations, the social laws, the society's customs and conventions; and three, the State or Governmental Laws which determine the relationship of man to man in the context of society as a political organism. Valluvar is concerned only with the first of these. The other two are changeable and changing. They have no universal validity. They vary with time and place. But not so the Moral Law. That is permanent and of universal applicability. It is this which Valluvar calls Aram.

All Aram can be epitomised in the single commandment, "Be spotlessly pure of heart".[21] This supreme commandment of the code can be spelt out as follows: Avoid envy, lust, wrath and harsh word.[22] The observance of this Moral Law - Aram - or what the translators have called Virtue and Righteousness is not only a means to an other-worldly end, but to this world also. "It opens the gates of heaven and unlocks the treasures of the earth;

21. மனத்துக்கண் மாசிலன் ஆதல் அனைத்தறன்
ஆகுல நீர பிற. (34)

22. அழுக்காறு, அவா, வெகுளி, இன்னாச்சொல் நான்கும்
இழுக்கா இயன்றது அறம். (35)

then what else does profit more than Righteousness "[23]? It is as much important for life--affirmation as for life-negation. True joy of life flows only from walking in the path of Aram. "All else is sorrow and merits no praise".[24] Aram alone is worthy of practising. Anything else brings infamy and deserves to be avoided.[25] It is true that there are moments when the inherent weakness in man tempts him to turn away from it. There has to be a struggle within; but the poet understandingly persuades: "Do not postpone practising it. Commence it now and here. Make a resolve. It will be your never failing friend".[26] Again, "Do it when there is still breath in you"[27]; and "Do it as much as possible, and in every way".[28] Keep the goal always before you. Pursue its spirit wheresoever it guides you.[29] Incessant practice will help you in your struggle.

These then are the four cardinal elements of an ordered sociecty; (1) Belief in God, (2) Economic resources, (3) Spiritual leadership, (4) Observance of the Moral Law. There is perhaps no order of priority in these four values. They are to coexist and conjointly move as the four wheels of an automobile. Life would be at a standstill when any one wheel gets a flat tyre, and then will follow confusion, anxiety and anarchy.

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23. சிறப்பீனும் செல்வமும் ஈனும் அறத்தினூஉங்கு
ஆக்கம் எவனோ உயிர்க்கு. (31)

24. அறத்தான் வருவதே இன்பம்; மற்றெல்லாம்
புறத்த, புகழும் இல. (39)

25. செயற்பால தோரும் அறனே ஒருவற்கு
உயற்பால தோரும் பழி. (40)

26. அன்றறிவா மென்னா தறஞ்செய்க மற்றது
பொன்றுங்கால் பொன்றாத் துணை. (36)

27. வீழ்நாள் படாமை நன்றாற்றின் அஃதொருவன்
வாழ்நாள் வழியடைக்கும் கல். (38)

28. ஒல்லும் வகையான் அறவினை ஓவாதே
செல்லும்வாய் எல்லாம் செயல். (33)

29. கலங்காது கண்ட வினைக்கண் துளங்காது
தூக்கங் கடிந்து செயல். (668)

I have dwelt at some length on these four cardinal postulates of Valluvar, because they pervade his entire thought-pattern. All his economic ideas could be understood in their proper significance only in their background. They embody his permanent values, and whatever he says subsequently have meaning only with relevance to them. They are the key to the understanding of the rest of the Kural. The Introduction is not to be skipped over. It holds the master key to the unlocking of the treasures in the 129 Chapters that follow. It is no accident, that a contemporary poet exhorted the reader to learn all the 1330 Kural stanzas, but in the context of the Introduction.[30]

What strange assortment of values—God, Economics, Sacrifice and Morals! Yet they are the inevitable products that an attempt at a synthesis of matter and spirit, of life-negation and life-affirmation, bring about. Maybe there are those who differ from Valluvar; maybe there are philosophers who could work out a better synthesis and work out other value patterns. But let them see to it that they have universality and timelessness. Valluvar is no dogmatist. In all humility, he says: "Whatsoever spoken, by whomsoever spoken, discern the truth in it. That is Wisdam".[31]

III

ECONOMICS OF PERMANENCE

Some years back, my late lamented friend, Dr. J. C. Kumarappa, wrote a book on the "Economics of Permanence." In it he assailed much that is ephemeral in Keynesian economics in particular, and Western economic thought in general. His main thesis was that modern industrialisation spelt ruin and disaster to

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30. ஆயிரத்து முந்நூற்று முப்ப தருங்குறளும்
பாயிரத்தி னோடு பகர்ந்தற்பின்—போயொருத்தர்
வாய்க்கேட்க நூலுளவோ மன்னு தமிழ்ப்புலவ
ராய்க்கேட்க வீற்றிருக்க லாம். (16)
[Nattathanar in Thiruvalluvar Malai]

31. எப்பொருள் யார்யார்வாய்க் கேட்பினும், அப்பொருள்
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு. (423)

human civilisation, and so proceeded to work out a system on the lines of Gandhian economic thought, by which production is decentralised and problems of distribution automatically taken care of. By Economics of Permanence, it is not to this system I refer here. There are certain abiding permanent economic values that deserve to be maintained, whatever the economic system is, whatever the nature and objective of the economic process is, in any country and at any point of time. Thiruvalluvar has set them out in unmistakable terms. It is to this body of economic doctrines, or rather values, to which I refer mainly in this lecture.

Valluvar's economic ideas are mostly to be found in the Second Part of Thirukkural, the Porutpal, or the part dealing with Wealth. By Porutpal, Valluvar meant all that Kautilya meant by the word Arthasastra. Porul literally means "thing, substance, object, value, wealth, etc." It comprises the whole range of tangible objects that can be possessed, enjoyed, and lost, and which we require in daily life for the upkeep of a household, raising of a family, and virtuous fulfilment of life's obligations. It embraces all consumer and producer goods. The arts that serve the possession of these material goods are of economics and politics, the techniques of surviving in the struggle for existence. In a sense, it comprehends the entire science of economic sociology.

In Valluvar's time, economics was not yet a differentiated discipline. It was a part and parcel of politics, or the science of statecraft. It was more political economy than economics. Even in the West, economics did not become a distinct discipline until after the publication of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations in 1776. Even then, it was only Political Economy, and a part of Moral Philosophy. It is relevant to remember that Adam Smith wrote his classic on Political Economy when he was holding the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. It was not until the days of Alfred Marshall, a century later, that economics became a separate science. But, in our own days, his pupil, Lord Keynes, has begun to question the wisdom of this step and has indicated his preference for going back to the term Political Economy.

As a basic thinker, Valluvar has few peers. He postulates three fundamental freedoms for the individual citizen:

(i) Freedom from hunger, (ii) Freedom from disease, and (iii) Freedom from fear - arising out of aggression from within and without. Out of these three freedoms, flow all his ideas and ideals of an economic society. "Blessed is the realm that knows no famine or pestilence and is free from aggression".[1]

"The destruction of the poor is their poverty"—thus began Alfred Marshall, the doyen of classical economists when he set out to lay down his "Principles of Economics". It is the starting-point of modern economics. "The study of poverty is the study of the causes of the degradation of a large part of mankind." Valluvar's ideas on poverty are an elaborate poetical anticipation of Marshall's ideas. With equal emphasis does Thiruvalluvar condemn the evils of poverty. His was not a philosophy that extolled the virtues of poverty, as many schools of asceticism have done in their attempt to vindicate a life of negation. In ten graphic stanzas, he delineates the horrors of poverty in a manner that makes no mistaking of his faith in the philosophy of life-affirmation. "Nothing is more dreadfully painful than poverty".[2] "Infernal poverty blasts the joys of the earth and of heaven".[3] "Gripping poverty robs a man of the lofty nobility of his descent and the golden eloquence of his tongue",[4] "Chill penury benumbs one's noble feelings and makes one speak the language of a slave".[5] "Cursed poverty is a nest of

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1. உறுபசியும் ஓவாப் பிணியும் செறுபகையும்
சேரா தியல்வது நாடு. (734)

2. இன்மையின் இன்னாதது யாதுஎனின் இன்மையின்
இன்மையே இன்னா தது, (1041)

3. இன்மை யெனஒரு பாவி மறுமையும்
இம்மையும் இன்றி வரும். (1042)

4. தொல்வரவும் தோலும் கெடுக்கும் தொகையாக
நல்குரவு என்னும் நசை. (1043)

5 இற்பிறந்தார் கண்ணேயும் இன்மை இளிவந்த
சொல்பிறக்கும் சோர்வு தரும்.



evils ".[6] "The deliverance of the poor is only in total renunciation. Far better that, than they batten on other men's salt and soup ".[7]

If poverty is an unmixed evil, begging is no remedy for it. "It is the height of folly to redress the ills of poverty by begging".[8] Those who hold that begging is inevitable or decreed by fate are wrong. If so, "may the Creator of the Universe who has decreed so, go a begging and perish ".[9] Indignation at the very thought that disparities are God-made reaches its climax. Valluvar could not tolerate such doctrines—attempts at laying at the doors of God what man has done. For, begging is a denial of the dignity in man, the God in man. "Thou shalt earn thy bread in the sweat of thy brow" — that is what God has ordained, not by begging. "The thin gruel tastes as sweet as ambrosia to him who has earned it in the sweat of his brow".[10] "It is most heinous to beg for a bucketful of water even to quench the feverish thirst of a sinking cow".[11] "The noble dignity that stoops not to base beggary, even in dire want, surpasses the glory and loveliness of the earth ".[12]

Although Valluvar has painted in these lurid colours the "Dread of Begging", he was aware that the realities of life sometimes forced this indignity on some unfortunate few; and Valluvar

6. நல்குரவு என்னும் இடும்பையுள் பல்குரைத்
துன்பங்கள் சென்று படும். (1045)

7. துப்புரவு இல்லார் துவரத் துறவாமை
உப்பிற்கும் காடிக்கும் கூற்று. (1050)

8. இன்மை இடும்பை இரந்துதீர் வாம்என்னும்
வன்மையின் வன்பாட்டது இல். (1063)

9. இரந்தும் உயிர்வாழ்தல் வேண்டின் பரந்து
கெடுக உலகியாற்றி யான். (1062)

10. தெண்ணீர் அடுபுற்கை யாயினும் தாள்தந்தது
உண்ணலின் ஊங்கினியது இல். (1065)

11. ஆவிற்கு நீர் என்று இரப்பினும் நாவிற்கு
இரவின் இளிவந்தது இல். (1066)

12. இடம்எல்லாம் கொள்ளாத் தகைத்தே இடம்இல்லாக்
காலும் இரவொல்லாச் சால்பு (1064)

relies on the social conscience of the more fortunate fellow-beings to mitigate the evil. There are circumstances which may make begging permissible; he mentions these; but what he really wishes to emphasise is the social responsibility of the community at large to the problem of beggary. "Knock at rich men's doors. If they relieve not your wretchedness, the sin is theirs, and not thine".[13] "Even the beautiful earth becomes an empty puppet show, if the mendicancy that stirs all the springs of pity dies out and is for ever banished".[14] With gentle sarcasm, the Poet says, "Scowl not at them who give no charity; for who knows they may be as poor and helpless as you".[15] Those who have no social conscience are as poverty-stricken as the beggars themselves.

But to this social responsibility for begging, Valluvar comes through the individual. He does not spell out the need for any anti-begging legislation, such as might have been thought of in our own days. Not that he excludes legislative action. The fact that he places the theme in the Division which is intended for the instruction of Kings has its own significance for State action. But Valluvar feels that it is the individual values and individual sanctions that ultimately matter, and it is through individual thought and action that the social conscience is really touched. Like Alfred Marshall, he makes a great appeal to the social possibilities of "economic chivalry".

Having condemned poverty and begging as the greatest curses of a society, Valluvar proceeds to affirm the importance of accumulation of wealth in a positive manner. "The poor are for ever held in contempt, the rich are always belauded"; for, the wealthy man is like one "who in joy and security witnesses an elephant

13. இரக்க இரத்தக்கார்க் காணின் கரப்பின்
அவர்பழி தம்பழி அன்று. (1051)

14. இரப்பாரை இல்லாயின் ஈர்ங்கண்மா ஞாலம்
மரப்பாவை சென்றுவந் தற்று. (1058)

15. இரப்பான் வெகுளாமை வேண்டும் நிரப்பிடும்பை
தானேயும் சாலும் சரி. (1060)

fight from a secure hill-top, far away from the turmoil".[16] But it is noteworthy that typical of his integrated philosophy of life, Thiruvalluvar lays equal emphasis on the means of acquiring wealth. Like all economists he holds that wealth is only a means, and not an end. But he insists that the means of acquiring wealth should be not merely legally correct, but also morally proper. "Out of a fortune built up by fair means, flow the joys of earthly felicities and the fulfilment of a virtuous code of conduct".[17] The emphasis here is on the words "fair means". Again he says, "Acquire a great fortune by noble and honourable means". This applies even to Governments. There is no compartmental morality in his code. "Let wealth be accumulated by the King on the bedrock of everlasting love and mercy".[18] Indeed, we are reminded of Alfred Marshall's words again:

"And very often the influence exerted on a person's character by the amount of his income is hardly less, if it is less than that exerted by the way in which it is earned".

While great store is laid on accumulation of wealth, Valluvar, ever intent on the message that wealth is only a means to an end, condemns excessive parsimony and hoarding of riches. "Behold a niggard who, in pursuit of gold as an end in itself, is forgetful of all the blessings that flow from it. He is a very monster born".[19] "A hoarder is a burden to the earth".[20] Such hoards, he designates as "Profitless Riches". "He whose wealth is neither

16. குன்றேறி யானைப்போர் கண்டற்றால் தனைகைத்தொறு
உண்டாகச் செய்வான் வினை. (758)

17. அறனீனும் இன்பமும் ஈனும் திறனறிந்து
தீதின்றி வந்த பொருள். (754)

18. அருளொடும் அன்பொடும் வாராப் பொருளாக்கம்
புல்லார் புரள விடல். (755)

19. பொருளானும் எல்லாம் என்று ஈயாது இவறும்
மருளானும் மாணாப் பிறப்பு. (1002)

20. ஈட்டம் இன்றி இசை வேண்டா ஆடவர்
தோற்றம் நிலக்குப் பொறை. (1003)

for himself nor for others drinks the cup of misery".[21] He compares hoarded wealth to the fading gloom on the cheeks of a fair lonely maid[22]. Nay, more. Hoarded wealth can be a source of positive harm. It may work against the common good even as "the fruits of a poisonous tree in the heart of a village".[23] "A miser is one among the dead; no good comes of him".

An economic society which despises poverty, begging and hoarding and encourages accumulation, consumption, and better distribution must have on the part of its citizens certain moral and spiritual qualities. Valluvar therefore thoughtfully lays his hand on these and elaborates them, one by one, with great poetical power.

First and foremost, Valluvar places the spirit of industry in the individual. He calls it the "unflagging energy". It is this, according to him, that marks out the prosperous from the poor. The idle rich are, indeed, the really poor from a social and spiritual point of view.[24] Industry is real wealth; for the wealth that flows from the restless energy of the soul is the only possession that is lasting. All else fade and crumble away.[25] Even in the midst of a setback in fortune, despair does not seize the heart of such men.[26] There is a touch of grandeur in a man of

21. ஏதம் பெருஞ் செல்வம் தான் துவ்வான் தக்கார்க்கு
ஒன்று ஈதல் இயல்பிலா தான். (1006)

22. அற்றார்க்கு ஒன்று ஆற்றாதான் செல்வம் மிகநலம்
பெற்றாள் தமியள் மூத்தற்று. (1007)

23. நச்சப் படாதவன் செல்வம் நடுவூருள்
நச்சுமாம் பழுத்தற்று. (1008)

24. உடையரெனப் படுவது ஊக்கம் அஃதிலார்
உடையது உடையரோ மற்று. (51)

25. உள்ளம் உடைமை உடைமை பொருளுடைமை
நில்லாது நீங்கி விடும். (592)

26. ஆக்கம் இழந்தேமென்று அல்லாவார் ஊக்கம்
ஒருவர்தம் கைத்துடை யார். (593)

ambition, even when all his projects are shattered to ruins.[27] Indolent ease can never bring forth great achievements. Inexhaustible fund of energy is man's strength. Lacking it, he is one with stick and stone.[28] "The stem of the lotus plant is the measure of the water's depth. The energy of an individual is the measure of his achievement".[29]

So much is Valluvar convinced of the supreme importance of the spirit of industry as the dynamic force behind economic society that he proceeds to work it out in all its implications and shades in three more chapters under the headings "Abstention from Sloth", "Manly Effort" and "Courage in Crisis". Again and again, he cries "Despair not". Industry brings wealth; sloth, poverty. The Goddess of Wealth runs after the man of energy and enterprise, and smiles on his home. For the lazy and the indolent there is a different visitor—the she-devil of poverty.[30] Leave no work unfinished. The world will not forgive you. It will turn its back on you.[31] Scorn delights and live laborious days. You shall become a tower of strength to society.[32] To lack resources is no disgrace; but to sit idle is a vile reproach.[33] Labour is the greatest resource.[34] The plans and programmes of one who lacks

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27. உள்ளுவ தெல்லாம் உயர்வுள்ளல் மற்றது
தள்ளினும் தள்ளாமை நீர்த்து. (596)
28. உரம் ஒருவற்கு உள்ள வெறுக்கை அ∴திலார்
மரம் மக்க ளாதலே வேறு. (600)
29. வெள்ளத் தனைய மலர் நீட்டம் மாந்தர்தம்
உள்ளத் தனையது உயர்வு (595)
30. மடியுளாள் மாமுகடி யென்ப மடியிலான்
தாளுளாள் தாமரையி னாள் (617)
31. வினைக்கண் வினைகெடல் ஓம்பல் வினைக்குறை
தீர்ந்தாரின் தீர்ந்தன் றுலகு. (612)
32. இன்பம் விழையான் வினைவிழைவான் தன்கேளிர்
துன்பம் துடைத்தூன்றும் தூண். (615)
33. பொறியின்மை யார்க்கும் பழியன்று அறிவறிந்து
ஆள்வினை இன்மை பழி. (618)
34. தெய்வத்தான் ஆகாதெனினும் முயற்சிதன்
மெய்வருத்தக் கூலி தரும் (619)

the will to translate them are but day-dreams. They are as ineffectual as the sword in the hands of a coward.[35] To him is not given the noble pride of a benevolent heart.[36] "Yield not to despair", he again exhorts. Cry not in distress—"The task is beyond me". Put forth your manly efforts. They will rouse your slumbering courage, and you shall achieve the most arduous tasks of life.[37] Forgetfulness, procrastination, sloth and lazy sleep are frail canoes. Man voyaging in them gets wrecked in trackless waters.[38] Idleness is a viper. Out of it spring the ruins of the society.[39]

Life, Valluvar realises, is an unceasing struggle, and for that struggle, the individual requires to be fully equipped. Temporary setbacks should not be allowed to paralyse human effort. What is needed is a "well-bred bull's energy". Even as it struggles its way through the ups and downs of the rugged terrain, so do you pull through thick and thin, come hail, come storm.[40] Smile scornfully at the frowns of fortune. That is the only way to chase leaden-eyed despair.[41] Against the shores of iron will and unflagging courage, the never-ending waves beat in vain.[42] Find joy in

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35. தாளாண்மை இல்லாதான் வேளாண்மை பேடிகை
வாளாண்மை போலக் கெடும்)614)
36. தாளாண்மை என்னும் தகைமைக்கண் தங்கிற்றே
வேளாண்மை என்னும் செருக்கு (613)
37. அருமை உடைத்தென்று அசாவாமை வேண்டும்
பெருமை முயற்சி தரும் (611)
38. நெடுநீர் மறவி மடி துயில் நான்கும்
கெடுநீரார் காமக் கலன் (605)
39. மடிமடிக் கொண்டொழுகும் பேதை பிறந்த
குடி மடியும் தன்னினும் முந்து (60[illegible])
40. மடுத்தவாய் எல்லாம் பகடு அன்னான் உற்ற
இடுக்கண் இடர்ப்பாடு உடைத்து (624)
41. இடுக்கண் வருங்கால் நகுக; அதனை
அடுத்தூர்வது அ∴து ஒப்பதில் (621)
42. வெள்ளத் தனைய இடும்பை அறிவுடையான்
உள்ளத்தின் உள்ளக் கெடும் (622)

the very stress and strain of work. You shall vanquish all opposition.[43]

All these remind us so much of the words of one of the greatest economists of our own times, the late Lord Keynes, on energy versus prudence as the driving force behind development of wealth: "Most probably, many of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many years to come, can only be taken as a result of animal spirits—of a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction...... Thus if the animal spirits are dimmed and the spontaneous optimism falters......enterprise will soon fade and die".

These are some broad hints we have of Valluvar's economic philosophy. Valluvar himself never worked out an economic system in all its elaboration. He was no system builder. A work of synthesis is bound to be somewhat eclectic in approach and general in treatment. But we have sufficient evidence to catch a glimpse of the constituents of an ideal economic society as Valluvar saw it.

The most important economic activity, according to Thiruvalluvar, is agriculture. This was not because the poet was living in a predominantly agricultural society, but because it is the most fundamental activity for all time. Food is the basis of life; and raising food is the primary occupation of mankind. "Husbandmen are the axle-pin of the world; for on their prosperity revolves the prosperity of the other sectors of the economy"[44]. Even saints who have forsaken the world needs must cease from spiritual pursuits, were farmers to sit idle with folded arms.[45] "You

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43. இடும்பைக்கு இடும்பை படுப்பர் இடும்பைக்கு
இடும்பை படாஅ தவர் (623)

44. உழுவார் உலகத்தார்க்கு ஆணிஅஃ தாற்றாது
எழுவாரை எல்லாம் பொறுத்து (1032)

45. உழவினார் கைம்மடங்கின் இல்லை விழைவதூஉம்
விட்டேம் என் பார்க்கும் நிலை (1036)

may pursue other walks of life; but ultimately you must be back to the plough; for that alone is the primary occupation"[46]. "That country which has a peasantry whose fields rustle with thick waves of corn becomes the refuge of several other countries"[47].

In thus stating the primacy of agriculture, it will be recalled, Valluvar is only particularising and illustrating the second of the four foundation ideas he postulated in the chapter on "Rains" in the Payiram or Introduction. He was concerned to establish that material support is essential for a life of positive living and that under the ultimate "principle of rain", agriculture assumes a basal character. All this he has done even at the start. Here, however, Valluvar introduces one further argument in favour of the importance of the agricultural sector. Agriculture alone is the most independent vocation. "The ploughmen alone", he says, "live as the freemen of the soil; the rest are mere slaves that batten on their toil"[48]. It may be, under various forms of State Trading and Controls, this is not true of many economies of the world today. It certainly is not true of the economies where the ploughmen have become tractor-men and with it the wage-slaves of the State. But Thiruvalluvar's ideal,—and perhaps that was the actual position in his days—appears to be an agricultural sector untrammelled by State intervention. In other words, Valluvar was for free enterprise in agriculture, and he valued highly the economic freedom it confers. "A peasant, who toils in the sweat of his brow, begs not at other men's doors, but ungrudgingly shares his bread with those that beg for alms"[49].

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46. சுழன்றும் ஏர்ப்பின்னது உலகம் அதனால்
உழன்றும் உழவே தலை (1031)

47. பல்குடை நீழலும் தங்குடைக்கீழ்க் காண்பர்
அலகுடை நீழ லவர் (1034)

48. உழுதுண்டு வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார் மற் றெல்லாம்
தொழுதுண்டு பின்செல் பவர் (1033)

49. இரவார் இரப்பார்க் கொன்று ஈவர் கரவாது
கைசெய்தூண் மாலை யவர் (1035)

Such was his concern for a well developed agriculture, that Valluvar deviates here from his practice of formulating only the broad general truths. He proceeds to lay down certain detailed agricultural techniques and cultural practices, which he considers highly important for a successful agriculture. Valluvar considers that the preparation of the soil is the first and foremost step. Land should be so ploughed and then exposed to the sun that the soil is completely aerated. The idea seems to be that it will then be in a position to receive and absorb the nitrogen and other organic elements from the atmosphere. Also, the weeds will have been destroyed at the roots. This can be done by intense and repeated ploughing. "Behold the land that is allowed to dry, until an ounce of earth crumbles into a quarter ounce of dust. She needs no manure and her harvest would be rich and abundant"[50].

He then proceeds to set out other important cultural practices in some order of importance. Ploughing is no doubt important, but even more so is manuring, and having manured, weeding assumes importance, and then irrigation, and above all, guarding the crop.[51] Land is a natural resource, which responds in proportion to the efforts put into it. The size and combination of inputs can overcome the inherent soil limitations. There is no such thing as a land unfit for cultivation. "Dame Earth seems to smile regretfully at the idle sons of the soil who put in no efforts and plead poverty."[52] He also recognises the importance of measures for control of floods, pests, and diseases, hail and storm and other natural calamities.

It is evident that the type of land tenure that Valluvar visualised was one of peasant proprietorship. That accorded with his basic

50. தொடிப்புழுதி கஃசா உணக்கின் பிடித்தெருவும்
வேண்டாது சாலப் படும். (1037)

51. ஏரினும் நன்றால் எருஇடுதல் கட்டபின்
நீரினும் நன்றதன் காப்பு. (1038)

52. இலமென்று அசைஇ இருப்பாரைக் காணின்
நிலமென்னும் நல்லாள் நகும். (1040)

demand for economic liberty of the individual, and the qualities of industry and enterprise demanded of every citizen. He was not in favour of absentee landlordism. "As sulky and sullen as a woman abandoned of her lord is the land abandoned of her owner."[53]

Could it be that Valluvar was an anticipator of the Physiocrats of the eighteenth-century France? The Physiocrats held that land alone produced a net product, and agriculturists alone were the productive class. The artificers, manufacturers and merchants were, according to this school, an unproductive class. Explaining their theory, Adam Smith wrote:

> "The unproductive class, that of merchants, artificers and manufacturers is maintained and employed altogether at the expense of the two other classes, of that of proprietors, and of that of cultivators. They furnish both with the materials of its work and with the fund of its subsistence, with the corn and cattle which it consumes while it is employed about the work. The proprietors and cultivators finally pay both the wages of all the workmen of the unproductive class, and the profits of all their employers".

There is more than one stanza in Valluvar's chapter on Agriculture which seem to anticipate the Physiocratic sentiments above quoted. The chapter opens with the statement that agriculture is superior to all other avocations. "Whirl as the world will, it must after all rely on the plough. Therefore agriculture is the most important of all industries".[54] Again in the next couplet he says, "Husbandmen are the lynch-pin of society, for they support all those that take to other work, not having the strength to plough.'[55] These two stanzas can be interpreted as attempts to establish the

53. செல்லான் கிழவன் இருப்பின் நிலம்புலந்து
இல்லாளின் ஊடி விடும். (1039)

54. சுழன்றும் ஏர்ப்பின்னது உலகம் அதனால்
உழந்தும் உழவே தலை. (1031)

55. உழுவார் உலகத்தார்க்கு ஆணிஅஃ தாற்றாது
எழுவாரை எல்லாம் பொறுத்து. (1032)

primacy and superiority of agriculture over other professions. But it is when we come to the third verse that we see something very close to the Physiocratic doctrine. Valluvar says, "Who ploughing eat their food, they truly live. The rest to others bend subservient, eating what they give."[56] Is this the same as what Adam Smith said of the Physiocratic doctrine above?

"Those workmen and their employers are properly the servants of the proprietors and cultivators. They are only servants who work without doors, as menial servants work within. Both the one and the other, however, are equally maintained at the expense of the same master. The labour of both is equally unproductive".

We should be careful in reading too much of latter day thoughts into Valluvar. The Physiocrats, it should be remembered, were removed about 18 centuries from Valluvar's stream of economic thought. It is true both describe those engaged in non-agricultural pursuits as "servile or servants". But to me it appears that they mean quite different things. The Physiocrats held that agriculture alone was the "productive" occupation and so compared the people engaged as artificers, manufacturers and merchants to "servants" who in their concept did not produce anything "tangible" in value. The concept of value as embracing both goods and service had not entered into economic thought yet. Even Adam Smith who enters into a caveat with the Physiocrats at this point does not refute their main value thesis. The other sectors are still "un-productive". "The industry of merchants, artificers and manufactures, though in its own nature altogether unproductive, yet contributes in this manner indirectly to increase the produce of the land". Therefore, "The unproductive class, however, is not only useful, but greatly useful to the other two classes (proprietors and cultivators of land)".

This, however, does not appear to be the sense in which Valluvar was employing the word "servant" or "servile" or "subservient" (in whatever term it is translated) as applied to

56. உழுதுண்டு வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார் மற்றெல்லாம்
தொழுதுண்டு பின்செல் பவர். (1033)

those who are engaged in avocations other than agriculture. There is no suggestion that what these produced had no value, or that their pursuits are "unproductive". All Valluvar meant to convey, it appears to me, was the basic dependence of all on agriculture for their food requirements and hence the supreme importance of investing it with primacy among the human activities, and fostering it with care. The others are "subservient" in the sense that they all have to depend on growers of food in the ultimate analysis. The economic freedom of the grower of food is basic; that of others only derived. For, Valluvar was not living in a primitive or pastoral society. In his days, Tamil land had reached a high degree of material civilisation — a developed agriculture, a variety of arts and manufactures, and a brisk foreign trade with distant Greece and Rome. The Sangam literature, in particular the works like Pattinappalai and Purananuru, bear ample references to the advanced stage of the arts and crafts. It is with all these advances in the arts and technique of industry and trade that Valluvar held that agriculture has the pride of place among economic activities.

Why was this? Historically, the Physiocratic doctrine of the elevation of agriculture as the only source of "net product" arose as a reaction to Colbert's excessive encouragement to trade and manufacture to the neglect of land. Was there such a reaction in Valluvar's days? That would be assuming that history should repeat itself and produce unerring parallels—a thesis which is not warranted. But perhaps there was a period when the neglect of agriculture in Tamilnad was serious, the taxes on land extortionate, and the oppression of the peasantry severe. There are references in the Sangam literature to farmer-poets exhorting the kings to keep their oppressive hands off the peasantry.[57] There might have been recurrent famines, floods and pestilence and periodical food

57. நளியிரு முந்நீர்........
வெளிற்றுப் பனந்துணியின் வீற்றுவீற்றுக் கிடப்ப,
களிற்றுக் கணம் பொருத கண்ணகன் பறந்தலை,
வருபடை தாங்கி, பெயர்புறத் தார்த்து,
பொருபடை தருஉம் கொற்றமும் உழுபடை
ஊன்றுசால் மருங்கின் ஈன்றதன் பயனே;

shortages. It was in times such as these that Valluvar might have lived; and it is likely that the great achievements of the Chola Emperor Karikala who was either contemporaneous with Valluvar, or might have immediately followed him, — this Tamil Emperor's achievements in the field of land reclamation, colonisation, construction of dams, and other far-reaching works of agricultural development felt the impact of Valluvar's thoughts. This, however, is for the historian of South India. All that I can say is, we shall beware of labelling fundamental thinkers like Valluvar, who start from first principles, as Physiocrats and Agricultural Fundamentalists. The Physiocrats of France set agriculture against industry; the Agricultural Fundamentalists in the United States pitted the rural against urban society. Valluvar, we shall ever remember, came to reconcile, harmonise and synthesise. Schools he had none, systems he did not build, and sentiments few. He was a philosopher who went down to the grass roots and spanned his thoughts over the arc of eternity.

The self-same spirit of caution should inform the critic in interpreting Valluvar's indictment of hoarding and excessive parsimony elaborated under the rubric "Profitless riches". It is easy to fall into the temptation of finding a kinship between Valluvar's ideas and the over-saving and under-investment theories of latter day economists like Rev. Malthus, J. A. Robson and John Maynard Keynes, and exclaim how very modern Valluvar is! Such temptations must be resisted. For, the contexts are entirely different. The modern theories of over-saving and under-investment

மாரி பொய்ப்பினும், வாரி குன்றினும்,
இயற்கை அல்லன செயற்கையில் தோன்றினும்,
காவலர் பழிக்கும்,இக் கண்ணகல் ஞாலம் ;
அதுநன் கறிந்தனை யாயின், நீயும்
நொதுமலாளர் பொதுமொழி கொள்ளாது,
பகடுபுறந் தருநர் பாரம் ஓம்பி,
குடிபுறந் தருகுவை யாயின்,நின்
அடிபுறந் தருகுவர், அடங்கா தோரே. ((புறம்-35)
(வெள்ளைக்குடி நாகனார் சோழன் குளமுற்றத்துத்
துஞ்சிய கிள்ளிவளவனை நோக்கிப்பாடியது).

are born of the analysis of a particular economic situation and at a particular point of time. There is nothing of the moral flavour about these theories when they are offered as solutions to the unclogging of the economic mechanism. Valluvar, on the other hand, had all along the moral values in the background. When he condemns hoarding and miserliness, the doctrine assumes the attributes of seminality and timelessness about it. It is always wrong to hoard; and that because it clogs the springs of Charity. Perhaps ultimately the doctrines of both, Valluvar and the neo-classical economists arrive at the same point and same goal, namely, through better consumption and better distribution, a better production. And in the case of men like J. A. Hobson the social purpose so much dominated the purely objective economic analysis, that for a long time he was not taken seriously by the professional economists. In a social science like economics, it is impossible to distinguish in its theories what is purely a social goal and what is purely an economic goal. They do not conflict with each other. They inter-mingle like milk and water, difficult to separate. Good ethics is also good economics. In Valluvar it is so. All that we have to see is that the standpoints are different, the thinking process different, the tools too; but not the goal.

Not that Valluvar does not encourage thrift, or that he sings the paean of praise of extravagance. Ever intent on striking a golden mean, Valluvar warns, "Give; always give; but let your giving be governed by your resources. Be thrifty, but not to verge on miserliness". "Let your charity be proportionate to your wealth. That is the way to preserve it."[58] Again, "Behold the man who lavishes his wealth beyond his resources; he appears to be prosperous, but he only treads the downward path to destruction"[59], and finally, 'Generosity, which is blind to its

58. ஆற்றின் அளவறிந்து ஈக அதுபொருள்
போற்றி வழங்கும் நெறி (477)

59. அளவறிந்து வாழாதான் வாழ்க்கை உளபோல
இல்லாகித் தோன்றாக் கெடும். (479)

resources, perishes of its own accord.[60] If it were permissible to translate his ideas in modern economic language, we should say, Valluvar was neither for over-saving, nor for under-saving; neither for over-spending, nor for under-spending. He was for a balance in all things. In the ultimate analysis this alone can partake of the perennial values of a stable economic principle.

Land, labour and capital—these were the three agents of production according to classical economics. Alfred Marshall at the end of the nineteenth century added a fourth factor, organisation or knowledge to include the activities of the entrepreneurs who had come to play a crucial role in an industrially advancing free enterprise economy. Valluvar classifies the agents of production in a somewhat different manner. An unfailing harvest, a competent body of men and a group of men whose wealth knows no dimunition—these three he considers to be the important ingredient of an economic society.[61]

It is significant to note that Valluvar's emphasis is on the end-product of land rather than on land itself. There are other elements required to make land yield a harvest: rain or water to which he has given so much prominence even at the outset of his work, other inputs like ploughing, manuring, weeding, watching etc., all of which he works out in detail in his chapter on Agriculture. He is not obviously thinking of the mineral wealth that lies buried in the land and of its exploitation. In a simple economic society, they were obviously secondary. The greatest natural resource he repeats is water, the rain, the surface flow in rivers and brooks, and the subsoil water that can be tapped through wells. He was concerned to point out the ultimate base of an economic society, and that is the raising of food. That activity depends on an interaction of a variety of agents, of which land is one, though an important one. In fact the phrase *தள்ளா*

60. உளவரை தூக்காத ஒப்புர வாண்மை
வளவரை வல்லைக் கெடும். (480)

61. தள்ளா விளையுளும் தக்காரும் தாழ்விலாச்
செல்வருஞ் சேர்வது நாடு. (731)

விளையுள் meaning 'never failing harvest' has been interpreted by some commentators as referring to a class of ever persevering peasantry.[62] If this is accepted, Valluvar was thinking more in terms of the human agents of production, rather than the natural agents; for, the other two agents of econamic activity are referred to only in terms of the human factor, namely, "a body of competent men, and a group of wealthy men". In the last analysis, organised economic society is a product of human endeavour. This is what distinguishes it from primitive societies in a "State of nature". This Human Factor is resolvable into three important classes in the population. These are the vital agents of economic activity—those who raise food, the body of competent men, and the men of wealth.

Who are these "body of competent men?" The translation of *தக்கார்* as "a body of competent men" is my own. The traditional commentators have interpreted it variously. Parimelazhagar identifies them with the sages or ascetics, the chosen few practising self-negation.[63] This no doubt accords with Valluvar's hypothesis postulated at the outset in the introduction under the title of "Greatness of men of renunciation". The men of sacrifice and spirit are a crucial element to the stability of a society. Lest there should be any doubt on this, the acute commentator thoughtfully adds: "இதனால் அழிவின்மை பெறப் பட்டது". That is, by postulating this class the continuity of the society is assumed.

Other commentators, however, give the word *தக்கார்* a more direct signification. Manakkudavar simply says, the 'men of competence. Paripperumal construes it as 'those of power, family and character'. Kalingar, as 'men with a fitting education and knowledge'. Perhaps it includes all these ideas, for the men of

62. மற்றை உயர்திணைப் பொருள்களோடும் சேர்தல்
தொழிலோடும் இயையாமையின் விளையுள் என்பது
உழவர் மேல் நின்றது. (பரிமேலழகர்)

63. அறவோர், துறந்தோர் அந்தணர் முதலாயினோர்
......இதனால் அழிவின்மை பெறப்பட்டது. (பரிமேலழகர்731)

renunciation and self-abnegation are also men of character, learning and wisdom. In a purely economic sense, however, the modern term "knowledge" which is a recent substitute for the earlier word "organisation" of the classical economists can connote this, but there is a difference. By "knowledge' what economists of the present day largely mean is the technological and organisational knowledge required for the production activities of a modern society. Valluvar's "men of knowledge" தக்கார் were something more than this. They were men who by diverse ways—knowledge and character, wisdom and sacrifice—worked for the stability and continuation of the society. That is a more fundamental concept.

Valluvar again does not refer to Capital in the abstract as a creative agent in an economic society. Rather, he refers to the men of wealth—the capitalists as such—if we may so call them. Some commentators would have this to mean the rich merchant princes who acquire wealth through internal and external commerce. Others would put a more qualitative construction and would have it as the rich who never relax in their acts of giving and yet whose wealth remains undiminished, and so on. Whatever be the interpretation, Valluvar was again thinking in terms of the human element in the accumulation of capital. The classes for him were basic, the class of agriculturists, the class of men of knowledge and character, and the class of capital owners. These were three distinct and separate elements of his economic society. It is obvious that the economic society of Valluvar's time had already reached a certain degree of complexity in which division of labour and specialisation of functions had attained a stratification in terms of classes, who, for short, may be called "The Agriculturists", "The Intellectuals" and "The Capitalists." Indeed this identification of the factors of production with the human agents responsible for activating these is a practice that has been adopted by the classical economists, including Karl Marx until the advent of Marginal school of economists. In Marx's hands this identification became a powerful tool for the postulation of clan way doctrine; and it was a realisation of the dangers of this that made the Marginalists dissociate the human aspect from the factors

of production and think in terms of disembodied land, labour and capital.

What about Labour as a factor of production? To me it appears the term தக்கார் interpreted severally as a body of competent men, men of knowledge, character, and family, men of sacrifice and learning, etc. may well have been used in a comprehensive sense to include both "labour" and "organisation" or "knowledge". The notion that labour is a separate category was born only since the advent of the Industrial Revolution when the producers of goods were divorced from the means of production. In a comparatively simple economic society such as that in which Valluvar lived, the workers were also the entrepreneurs or the men of "knowledge" in the economic sense. The word தக்கார் interpreted as an economic category can then be identified with two factors of production—labour and organisation—rolled into one.

In the fiscal sphere Valluvar assigns to the State the essential functions of Public Finance, namely, creation of revenues, collection of revenues, management (guarding) of revenues, and public expenditure[64]. In modern Public Finance these four functions may be equated with the three categories: Public Income, Financial Administration, and Public Expenditure, the functions of collections and "guarding" of revenues being now comprehended under the single title of Financial Administration.

Valluvar lists three main heads of Public Revenues (i) உறுபொருள்; (ii) உல்குபொருள்; (iii) தெறுபொருள்.[65] Commentators differ widely on their meaning. Parimelazhagar interprets உறுபொருள் as the wealth of heirless estates.[66] Both Manakudavar and Parip-perumal first give merely the literary meaning, "Wealth that comes

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64. இயற்றலும் ஈட்டலும் காத்தலும் காத்த
வகுத்தலும் வல்லது அரசு. (385)

65. உறுபொருளும் உல்கு பொருளும்தன் ஒன்னார்த்
தெறுபொருளும் வேந்தன் பொருள். (756)

66. வைத்தாரிறந்துபோக நெடுங்காலம் நிலத்தின்கட்கிடந்து
பின் கண்டெடுத்ததூஉம் தாயத்தார் பொருத்தூஉமாம்.
(பரிமேலழகர் 756)

by itself'. But by way of further explanation, Manakkudavar gives the meaning காவற்பொருள், that is fee or tax levied for defence. (This, however, is not found in one of the palm leaf manuscripts); and Paripperumal goes back to Parimelazhagar's rendering of escheats. Parithiyar and Kalingar, however, deviate from these three. The former would have it as the "taxes from the subjects", and the latter "the just dues the subjects pay."

Apparently there was a conflict among some of the commentators—all of whom are much later to Valluvar—as to whether the Ruler is really the heir to escheats, and they seized the occasion to give vent to their own ideas on the subject; for, it is doubtful if escheats by themselves can ever form a major head of State revenues. Parimelazhagar, conscious of this objection as it were, adds another category, namely treasures hidden under the earth and discovered long after the owner had passed away. But even this addition cannot constitute a source of revenue that can rank as a major head. Both these are quite minor and irregular source of State income. The major source of income for States in India has always been the land revenue, the traditional one-sixth of the produce. This has been so well established in the minds and beliefs of the Indian peoples by successive law givers from time immemorial, that its payment became a part of the normal duties of every citizen—in fact it has been called *kadamai* or duty. The psychology of the taxpayer has been so conditioned by tradition that it had lost all touches of compulsoriness about it. It had become an involuntary payment. Custom did the work of law. Manakkudavar seems to explain that this was so, because land revenue was in the nature of a payment for the security that the State confers on them. So it was ungrudgingly, voluntarily paid. Hence was it உறுபொருள் the wealth that comes of its own accord. The expression also conveys the sense of legitimacy உறு or உற்ற that which is due.

For, Valluvar was against any undue compulsion in taxation. His famous dictum in this context is worth repeating. "The king who extorts money at the point of the bayonet is like a highway man, who waylays the benighted traveller with his threatening cry

—"Stand and deliver[67]. It is significant that Valluvar did not refer to the traditional one-sixth or lay down any other unvarying proportion of the producer as land tax. There were times when the state of harvests did not permit of the one-sixth. Even so, some payment was voluntarily made. If Parimelazhagar were allowed to have his own way in this context, he would not only have denied the State of an important source of revenue that has been the mainstay of the State fisc for ages, but would also have ignored the built-in voluntary concept of Valluvar in matters of taxation. It must, however, be said in fairness to this acute commentator that he takes care to add, 'the one-sixth share of produce being taken for granted, only the additional sources are mentioned etc.'[68] Thus he knew land revenue could not be ignored.

The next major head of State's resources is உல்கு or Customs. This term உல்கு seems to be the same as the Sanskrit word சுல்கு or சுல்கம். The later Tamil word சுங்கம் seems to be a corruption of சுல்கம். This tax head, the commentators say, refers to the duties levied on commerce both by water and road—import and export duties as well as internal customs duties. Obviously, in Tamilnad at the time of Valluvar, trade and commerce were important activities and they yielded considerable revenues by way of customs. The Chola kings at the port of Kaviripumpattinam had their merchandise stamped with their tiger insignia to make sure that the goods did not escape duty.

The third source of revenue to the State was the tribute paid by the vanquished enemies. This again has been considered a legitimate source of revenue all through history. In modern times this is represented by "reparations".

The term "creation of public revenues" has been interpreted by some in a modern sense. They hold that Valluvar had in mind the concept of State engaging directly in productive activities or

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67. வேலொடு நின்றான் இடுவென் றதுபோலும்
கோலொடு நின்றான் இரவு. (552)

68. ஆறிலொன்று ஒழியவும் உரியன கூறியவாறு.
பரிமேலழகர் (736)

what is now known as State or Public Enterprises. Although there is no direct evidence for such inference, it is possible that the ruler in those days had his demesne or Crown lands and the proper management and husbanding of its resources was laid down as an important duty of the state. The expression "creation" however, carries a different signification. By "creation", Valluvar presumably meant that the State should constantly be doing all that is necessary to "create" those conditions by which the yield from the major heads of revenue increases naturally and automatically. The nurturing and fostering of the taxable capacity of the population was laid down as a prime concern of the sovereign in the sphere of Public Finance. It is this which Valluvar must have had in his mind rather than starting and running of Public Enterprises, although the latter is not to be excluded. The creation of taxable capacity, indeed, is the hall-mark of any progressive economy.

The modern theory of Public Expenditure makes a distinction between Government and a private person. A Government, it is contended, need not at all times equate its expenditure with the revenues. The expenditure may well exceed the revenues, for the State is an entity with a time continuum. Not so the private person. And there are economists who even advocate a continuous deficit budgeting year after year—a course of action which they shall not permit for the individual.

What are Valluvar's ideas on this? Valluvar had for his ideal a society that generated current surplus and had built up a sizeable reserve. If such a surplus were not possible, let income and expenditure at least equal. "It is not a great misfortune for a State if its revenues are limited, provided the expenditure is kept within bounds". He seems to accord with Dickens: "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen, nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery". Again, he warns, "Behold the monarch who lavishes his wealth beyond his resources; he appears prosperous, but he only treads the downward path to destruction". Valluvar, no doubt, considers balancing of the budget as important for the State as for the individual. His guiding principles of a sound budgetary policy appear to be these: "Budget for a surplus, if possible; balance the budget at other times; but never budget for a deficit".

Modern budgetary theory may not accept such a rigid stand. There is one school which holds that while the budget need not be balanced in any particular year, there should be a balancing over a period of years. On this principle, there are those who advocate balancing the budget over the period of a trade cycle. Whatever the position, it is undeniable that no State can for ever go on running into large deficits. Sooner or later, the reckoning will come. Enormous public debt accumulates. Some then face the situation by a repudiation of debts, others by change of Government, still others by losing their economic, and eventually even political independence. The abandonment of the traditional concept of a balanced budget as a goal in itself, and the use of fiscal instruments of public expenditure and taxation to achieve economic stability are not the products so much of virtue as of necessity. The complexity of the modern economic phenomena, and the cyclical movements in a capitalist economy have been responsible for this change in attitude. Even so, it is admitted that when business is at a relatively high level and prices are stable a balanced budget is satisfactory and may even be preferred. This is the ideal which Valluvar was looking for.

The use of the term வகுத்தல் by Valluvar in the context of Public Expenditure has again given rise to speculations. Some read into Valluvar the modern notion that the task of Distribution is a basic function of the State. While it is true that all Public Expenditure results in distribution, it is not clear whether Valluvar held any theories about it, except that public funds must flow into useful channels, according to his over-all concept of ethics. Parimelazhagar goes into some detail pursuing his own ideas on the subject. He divides Public Expenditure into three parts, (vide commentary on kural 385) one part to be expended according to the ethical code or Aram, that is the expenditure to be incurred on Gods, holy men and the poor, as well as on the acquisition

of a name and glory; the second part to be spent on the basic needs of the polity such as on the army, the fort, and other items of defence, as well as on diplomacy such what may be called aid funds are included in this as keeping away certain groups from joining the enemy or tempting certain other groups to secede from the enemy; the third part to be spent on items of what Parimelazhagar calls 'Pleasure' or 'those which cater to the senses' such as, building of public halls and shelters, provision of water supply and irrigation works, building of parks and artificial hillocks. In short, according to this commentator, public expenditure broadly falls into (1) Defence, (2) Public Works, (3) Social Services.

Both Manakkudavar and Paripperumal, however, restrict the scope of Public Expenditure to defence and military purposes. Kalingar, although he does not give details, holds that Public Expenditure must comprehend the expenditure to be incurred both within and without the country. On the whole, however, it appears that Parimelazhagar's three-fold division of Public Expenditure appears satisfactory, although the contents and details of each of the divisions may vary from time to time in an economy. It is much more than a laissez faire notion of the State's role, and quite unlike the views of Manakkudavar and Paripperumal who would reduce the State to a Grand Policeman. On the other hand, in commenting on another couplet, both these commentators go further to extend State's activities. They consider that when in need the peasantry should be given assistance in kind by way of seed, manure, plough etc. They advocate moratorium and reduction of taxes. Parimelazhagar advocates permanent remission of taxes.

By all accounts, therefore, from an economic point of view, Valluvar's concept is nearer that of a Welfare State, if not of a Paternalistic one. Where the just king is equated with the very gods[69] it is a far cry from the state of laissez faire. Such is the

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69. அ∴தாவது ஆறிலொன்றுய பொருள் தன்னையும்
வறுவை நீங்கியவழி கொள்ளல் வேண்டின்
அவ்வாறு கோடலும், இழத்தல் வேண்டின்
இழத்தலுமாம். (பரிமேலழகர்—390)

importance Valluvar attaches to good Government as a precondition for economic progress that he opens his book on "Porutpal" of "Economics" with a statement of the cardinal features of sound administration.

Next to a sound administration, Valluvar looks upon education as basic to a progressive economy. In fact, both Manakkudavar and Paripperumal proceed to explain Valluvar's chapter-sequence thus: "Valluvar proceeds to examine the various factors that promote economic progress and so places education in the forefront"[70]. This seems to fit in with Valluvar's own ideas, when he says "Learning is an imperishable and flawless wealth; the rest is mere dross".[71] Valluvar undoubtedly knew the importance of knowledge as an essential factor of production—an infra structure as we now call it. Education has universal value and utility. "Behold a scholar who is a mine of wisdom; there is not a land which is not his own; there is not a country which is not his own; wherefore ye men should abandon learning unto the last close of life's taper?" he asks. Knowledge is a limitless ocean and education an unending process.[72] Not only does he emphasize the positive importance of acquiring knowledge, but he also warns in a whole chapter the negative results arising from uninstructed possession of wealth. "The wealth in the hands of the ignorant brings more ills in its trail than the poverty of the wise".[73] He sees in education a great force for social levelling up. "Men of learning, though born of low descent, command more reverance than a high born fool".[74] It is in education alone that he sees

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70. முறைசெய்து காப்பாற்றும் மன்னவன் மக்கட்கு
இறையென்று வைக்கப்படும். (388)

71. கேடில் விழுச்செல்வம் கல்வி ஒருவற்கு
மாடல்ல மற்றை யவை (400)

72. யாதானும் நாடாமால் ஊராமால் என்னொருவன்
சாந்துணையும் கல்லாத வாறு. (397)

73. நல்லார்கண் பட்ட வறுமையின் இன்னாதே
கல்லார்கண் பட்ட திரு. (408)

74. மேற்பிறந்தா ராயினுங் கல்லாதார் கீழ்ப்பிறந்துங்
கற்றார் அனைத்திலர் பாடு. (409)

the driving force that makes for progress; for, "it is that which distinguishes man from the beast".[75]

Next to education, Valluvar sets a great store by a proper system of public health services as a part of his socio-economic policy. It has been seen that "freedom from diseases" is ranked by him as one of the basic freedoms of man and that next only to freedom from hunger. He would not let his ideal state to fall a prey to epidemic diseases; and such was his concern for a society with a sound public health that Valluvar devotes a whole chapter to "medicine". In this he lays emphasis on the preventive and nutrition aspects of health. "Food, excessive or deficient, brings about disease".[76] "The secret of longevity is to eat with moderation, after what you ate had been well digested".[77] "Incompatible diet is the root of many diseases".[78] "Always wait for a keen appetite before you proceed to sit for a dinner".[79] These and other practical rules of guidance are set out by him with great earnestness. The science of medicine in his days was apparently a comprehensive discipline dealing with the patient, physician, the medicine and the male nurse. Valluvar fully recognises the importance of proper diagnosis in his system of medical treatment, the individual condition of the patient, and the appropriate timing of medication.

Other evils that do harm to the socio-economic life of a society according to Valluvar are drinking, gambling and prostitution. These have been regulated and legislated upon to varying

75. விலங்கொடு மக்க ளனையர் இலங்கு நூல்
கற்றாரோடு ஏனை யவர். (410)

76. மிகினும் குறையினும் நோய்செய்யும்; நூலோர்
வளிமுதலா எண்ணிய மூன்று. (941)

77. அற்றால் அளவறிந்து உண்க; அஃதுஉடம்பு
பெற்றான் நெடிதுய்க்கும் ஆறு. (943)

78. தீயளவு அன்றித் தெரியான் பெரிதுண்ணின்
நோயளவு இன்றிப் படும். (947)

79. அற்றது அறிந்து கடைப்பிடித்து மாறல்ல
துய்க்க துவரப் பசித்து. (944)

degrees by the governments of the world at different periods in history. In the Gandhian era, prohibition as a socio-economic policy has been written into the very Constitution of our Government. There is little doubt whatever that it would have gladdend Valluvar's heart.

An economic society which can guarantee the three basic freedom of Valluvar comes very near to what Prof. Gailbraith calls the "Affluent Society". Such a society should have ample accumulation or enormous surplus reserves. Currently also it must produce a surplus, adequate to absorb the shocks of all temporary losses arising from failure of rains or attack of pests. It should have the staying power to stand up to a sudden inrush of demand on its resources, and even then be in a position to raise all the resources needed from current income. The secret of a sound defence lies in its impregnable economic foundations, says Valluvar. It should be so strong that it repels all thoughts of foreign aggression; and even if a country's security is shaken for a while, it should possess the potential for a quick revival. "That alone is a country which has not to seek external resources. That is no country which has to depend on external resources".[80] In modern economic parlance, what Valluvar sought as the ideal was a self-sufficient, self-generating and self-propelling economy. (The expression *நாடா வளத்த* has been interpreted traditionally as "not having to work for"; rather, it should mean "that which does not depend on external aids"; "that which is self-generating"),

Such an economic society is distinguished by five prominent features-immunity from diseases, ample wealth, adequate food resources, a high standard of living, and an unfailing defence.[81] There are three things that he banishes from his economic society for ever: gnawing hunger, chronic diseases, and perpetual insecurity. "A kingdom is that which continues to be free from excessive

80. நாடென்ப நாடா வளத்தன; நாடல்ல
நாட வளந்தரும் நாடு. (739)

81. பிணியின்மை, செல்வம், விளைவு, இன்பம், ஏமம்
அணியென்ப நாட்டிற்கிவ் வைந்து. (738)

starvation, irremediable epidemics and destructive foes".[82] Internal security is no less important than the external. "It should be free from warring sects, internal dissensions and murderous traitors". Above all, there should be amity and concord between the ruler and the ruled. "Though blessed with all the varied gifts" a land gains nought that is not with its king at peace".[83] For Valluvar as with Adam Smith, defence was more important than opulence.

It is obvious that the Economic Society which Thiruvalluvar visualised was one based on faith in earthly possessions and the will to acquire them. It was a virile dynamic society with its roots deep in industry, enterprise and the perseverance of its citizens, with a love of riches and consumption of worldly goods, hatred of poverty, begging, hoarding and indolence. While the need for a perpetual struggle in the face of odds as the *sine qua non* for the success receives great emphasis, what Valluvar delineates is not a society where every one is for himself and the devil takes the hindmost, such as was pictured by some economists, about the capitalism of the early 19th century, and which brought it into contempt by men like Ruskin and earned for it the odium of the Science of Mammon. The Economic Society of Valluvar's choice is to be informed by a vigilant social consciousness, a code of basic moral values and sound welfare principles. It is too much to read into Valluvar all that in modern times is meant by the Welfare Society. Valluvar seems to have relied on the individual values more than on State action for the translation of the welfare principles into programmes of action; for, it is the ideas and aspirations, sanction and participation of the individual that ultimately count for the emergence and success of corporate State action. Without these conditions obtaining on the part of individuals, no welfare society could last long. It is on this perennial aspect that Thiruvalluvar laid real stress.

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82. உறுபசியும் ஓவாப் பிணியும் செறுபகையும்
சேராது இயல்வது நாடு. (734)

83. ஆங்குஅமைவு எய்தியக் கண்ணும் பயமின்றே
வேந்துஅமை வில்லாத நாடு. (740)

In this concluding lecture, I shall attempt at an estimate of Valluvar as a fundamental economic thinker. Indeed he has often been compared with the Buddha and Christ, but that is relevant only in the sphere of the spirit, in his role as a teacher of perennial ethical values. For both Buddha and Christ were primarily concerned with things of the other world-Nirvana and the Kingdom of God, and the ordering of the individual way of life to achieve this goal. They came to teach the autonomy of the spirit from worldly events, and the burden of their message was the elevation of souls, not on the organization of society. Economics, if any, in their teachings was largely incidental. With Christ it even appears to be neutral. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's". For a true appreciation of the contribution of Valluvar in the field of economics, therefore, we should turn to those teachers who had devoted their attention to the earthly aspect of man's well-being.

I have taken for comparison three representative schools of thought: the Greek, the Sanskrit and the Modern schools. The representatives of the Greek Scholars are Plato and Aristotle, whose writings and thinking set the pattern of western economic thought for over 20 centuries till the dawn of Industrial Revolution. Although Aristotle was the pupil of plato, it is well-known that the differences between the master's *Republic* and the pupil's works on *Ethics* and *Politics* were so great that they deserve separate treatment. Among the Sanskrit writers, the name that comes uppermost is that of Kautilya or Chanakya, the celebrated author of the *Arthasastra,* and among the moderns, the claim for comparison may well be given to Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations.*

In thus attempting an evaluation, I have kept in mind one basic principle of analysis, namely, that in economics as elsewhere, most statements of fundamental facts acquire importance only by the superstructure they are made to bear and are commonplace in the absence of such superstructure. I have looked upon the ideas of the ancient writers as mostly basic in character, as at best "scientific splinters of economic thought" and any comparison

is valid only when looked at from this point of view. Above all, I have tried my best not to fall into the error of hailing as a discovery everything in Valluvar's ideas that suggests later developments or of making comparisons without relevance to the times and environments in which the different thinkers lived and had their being. With these brief remarks to serve as a defensive mechanism, I shall now turn to Plato first.

Plato's vision of an ideal state is given in his *Politieia* or the *Rupublic*. This is usually classed among the utopias or imaginative works embodying certain ideals. The Germans class them as "State Novels". Plato's was the first of these State Novels. It is a vision or an artistic creation of a Perfect State, not at all based on empirical experience or economic analysis. This Perfect State was small in size, something of the City-State, stationary in population and wealth. Life in it was strictly regulated by a caste system permanently and rigidly organised. In it wealth is limited and freedom of speech restricted. It has been described by some as the prototype of a corporate or fascist State. The ideal State pictured by Plato and Valluvar are as different as chalk is from cheese.

As for Aristotle, he no doubt paradied and criticised his master's ideal Republic, but what he gave in its place was even far removed from that of Valluvar. For Aristotle slavery was essential. Inequality was natural; inferiority congenital; democracy only for the Greek born. Unlike Valluvar who wrote predominantly for the common man, Aristotle wrote for a leisure class, which held work and business pursuits in contempt. Nor is there an integration of ethics and economics in Aristotle as has been achieved by Thiruvalluvar.

Attempts have, however, been made to draw a parallel between the economic ideas of Valluvar and those of Kautilya. Some hold that the Kural borrowed some of its economic doctrines from the Arthasastra. Others again, like the late Prof. Ramachandra Dikshitar, held that since Kautilya was a South Indian who went to the Mauryan Court, he carried with him some of Valluvar's

economic ideas and embodied them in the Arthasastra. In an article which I contributed to the Silver Jubilee Number of the Thiruvalluvar Kazhagam in 1952, I have had occasion to examine the implications of these views, and it was my conclusion that there was no evidence whatever, internal or external, for this influence of one upon the other. I shall, however, recapitulate some of the arguments here.

Firstly, the traditional legend that Kautilya lived in the 4th Century B.C. as a minister in the Court of Chandra Gupta Maurya has been seriously questioned. In the Volume entitled, "The Age of Imperial Unity" published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, six arguments are advanced against this theory, and all of them point out to a much later date for—Kautilya—according to Barridale Keith, 4th Century A.D. and not 4th Century B.C. Owing to pressure of time, I would refer the reader to that learned volume for this chronological controversy.

More important than the external evidence is the internal. There is no resemblance whatever between the basic economic ideas of Valluvar and Chanakya. Valluvar invests agriculture and agriculturists with a primacy that is denied totally in the Arthasastra. Chanakya lays down detailed devices by which the maximum revenue can be raised from land through fear and persuasion. A long list of taxes is framed for the purpose. Again., the concept of caste on which the Arthasastra raises its edifice is conspicuous by its absence in the Kural. The ethical foundation on which the economics of the Kural are raised is missing in the Arthasastra. The principles of taxation set out by the two writers are poles apart. Taxation by consent is the dominant canon in Valluvar's thesis. Taxation by fear and intimidation is the central teaching in that of Chanakya. Chanakya does not hesitate to exploit the superstition, credulity, religious beliefs, and even innocence of the subjects for enriching the coffers of the sovereign. So thoroughgoing was he in his objective that even drink and prostitution came in handy for State encouragement, if only they could yield revenue. This was something totally abhorrent to the author of the Kural.

Perhaps the man whose economic ideas are nearest to Valluvar is Adam Smith - in fundamentals, though not in details. The feudalistic society of England and the Continent was held in the frame of a rigid class structure. Adam Smith helped unshackle the individual from the bonds of petrifying economic traditions, unleash the spirit of individual enterprise, and thus prepared the way for the epoch of Industrial Revolution. In his own way Valluvar, by postulating the democratic basis of society, and the economic freedom of man to follow the pursuit that suited his aptitude best irrespective of caste or class laid the foundations of a new life for the Tamils. With Smith as with Valluvar human beings were made alike by birth, differences being mainly due to differences in training and differences in environment. For both, Political Economy is a collection of recipes for the statesman, aiming at "enriching of both the people and the Sovereign" (Introduction to *The Wealth of Nations*). Above all, both arrived at economics through the difficult path of ethics. Francis Hutcheson, the teacher of Adam Smith, was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow and so was Adam Smith. Before writing his monumental work *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith had written the treatise on *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, not so well known as the classic on economics. But it is in this work that Smith's philosophy of riches and of economic activity, and the ethical basis of *The Wealth of Nations* can be found. Smith made his ethical foundations sure in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* before he raised his economic superstructure in *The Wealth of Nations.* Valluvar too postulated his division on Ethics or "Arathuppal" before he went on to write his "*Porutpal*".

All this may look strange, for measured in the temporal scale, Valluvar and Smith stand removed by about 15 or 20 centuries; and yet the ideas of the dignity of man, the economic freedom of the individual, the concept of a dynamic society and the essential qualities needed of the individuals constituting such a society — were all ideas that were hotly canvassed by both. The greatness of Valluvar is that he has done them twenty centuries earlier.

What was the secret of this primal originality of Valluvar's thoughts? Earlier in these lectures, I characterised the work of Valluvar as a great synthesis — a harmonious blending of the ethical and the economical. Two major influences were at work in this process. The stream of economic ideas was that of the Tamils of the Sangam Age — indigenous. The stream of ethical ideas was from the protestant religions of Buddhism and Jainism — then foreign to Tamil land. The insistence on the importance of economic activity, the glorification of effort, enterprise, and what Lord Keynes in modern times called the 'animal spirit', the sanctity of love and war as the norms of life — all came from the virile life of the Tamils of the Sangam Age. The egalitarian ideas, the democratic concept of a society, that man to man is equal, that everyone is free to pursue the avocation that suits him best, that ethics should inform all his activity, the divinity that hedgeth the spirit of sacrifice, the moral responsibility of the individual to society — these received emphasis from the invading religions of the north. In Valluvar's alchemic poetry these two streams commingled into one, for ever obliterating the traces of dichotomy that is posed between ethics and economics. The resulting amalgam became a third product, distinct from the two, all original in its own, a superme achivement in the art of synthetic creation. Was it symbolic of these twin influences that his poetry was couched in couplets? What a fantasy!

It is important to realise the converging influences of these two streams of thought, not only for a true understanding of Valluvar's ideas, but also to appreciate the originality of the creative genius, and the grand purpose his work was to serve. Valluvar was standing at the watershed of two great epochs in the history of the Tamils—the golden past of the Sangam Age and the glorious future of the Pallava and Chola expansion. In between the twilight had descended on the life of the Tamils. The excessive materialism and earthly achievements of the Sangam Age had resulted in a hang-over, as it were, and the Tamils welcomed the new spiritual awakening as a life saving antidote. But within two or three centuries of this, the Tamils had become soft. Valluvar saw the need to redress the balance, and so forged his

path of the golden mean. The momentum that his great work gave sustained them for another thousand years until the last days of the mediaeval Chola power. Then, once again, the Tamils were enveloped in other-worldly ideas that came from a different stream, lost their zeal and vigour for material achievements, their social system got ossified, and so they went into a deep slumber for another spell of thousand years. All these thousand years, Valluvar's teachings indeed remained alive, only to support and authenticate the purely other-worldly direction of Tamilian life. Their equally potent influence for good in the material sphere of life went under. The balancing force of the Kural was lost sight of. Small wonder, therefore, that the Tamils, once again on the threshold of a great renaissance have now gone back to Valluvar for inspiration and revival of their native vigour, lost in the mazes of ten centuries of other-worldly preoccupation.

In the course of an attempt at an evaluation of Aristotle's Ethics, Bertrand Russel says that there are three questions we can ask about his ethics or that of any philosopher: (1) Is it internally self-consistent? (2) Is it consistent with the remainder of the author's news? (3) Does it give answers to ethical problems that are consonant to our own ethical feelings? He then adds, "If the answer to either the first or the second question is in the negative, the philosopher in question has been guilty of some intellectual error. But if the answer to the third question is in the negative, we have no right to say that he is mistaken. We have only the right to say that we do not like him".

It is now for the student of Thirukkural to say whether Thiruvalluvar had made any intellectual slip and whether he likes the philosopher or not.

"Go behind the veil of whatever things you may come across in life and track the spirit of truth to its subtlest retreats. Therein lies wisdom".—Valluvar.

